

## Burial place of Päts in Russia gets memorial stone



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Konstantin Pätsi haud Venemaal  
Foto: Videokaader

**This autumn, the stone placed at initiative of local Burashevo authorities will solemnly be decorated with a memorial tablet for Estonia's first President.**

Konstantin Pätsi hauakoht Venemaal  
: Postimees

At the end of June, Burashevo village council in Tver Oblast, Russia had a large four tonne memorial stone placed at the village cemetery on the one-time burial place of Estonia's first President Konstantin Päts. Soon, a tablet will be attached by Estonian activists.

Henn Latt, a man deeply involved in the discovery of Konstantin Päts' burial place and reburial of the President said the local Burashevo powers and inhabitants of the region highly respect the link of the first Estonian president with their village.

«The engine behind the stone was chairman of the village council Sergei Rozhkov, with Nikolai Pankratyev. We were tasked with preparing the memorial tablet, and preparing the stone to have it attached. So this is what we are currently busy doing. This fall, on the anniversary of the re-burial of Konstantin Päts, Burashevo will host the opening ceremony of the Päts memorial stone,» said Mr Latt.

According to Mr Latt, the marking of Konstantin Päts' burial site was initiated, in Russia, four years ago when 20 years had already passed since his remains were reburied.

Mr Latt, who played a vital role on finding the remains of Mr Päts, decided to visit Russia in 2010 with some acquaintances. «Once in Russia, we decided to also pay a visit to Burashevo. We went to the one-time burial site of Mr Päts' and had candles placed there. At the time, the

site was totally unmarked. The reburial of Mr Päts' remains to Metsakalmistu Cemetery, Tallinn, was a grand state-level event, but his burial site in Russia was altogether forgotten,» he said.

The word about the candles for Mr Päts started to spread and, at the initiative of Burashevo village council chairman Sergei Rumyantsev, a small cross was set up on the site. In the summer of 2011, the cross was dedicated with an orthodox priest and the local powers present.

«Since 2010, the relations between Estonians and Burashevo authorities have deepened. Thanks to the contacts developed, this June the local powers up and placed a large memorial stone at the burial place of Mr Päts,» said Mr Latt.

The memory of Konstantin Päts has also been conserved by Burashevo Secondary School, having a large part of its museum dedicated to the Estonian president. «The museum is managed by Natalya Grigoryeva, history teacher at the school. She has done a huge job conserving the memory of Mr Päts. It is really remarkable. I remember Ms Grigoryeva's emotional talks. Without ever glancing at any notes, she spoke in great detail of the life and activities by Mr Päts. Thing like this will touch your heart,» said Mr Latt.

According to Mr Latt, the museum item he remembers best is a large globe prepared by Ms Grigoryeva with places related to Mr Päts marked – from birth till death. For instance, the globe has markings about how Mr Päts lived in Pärnu, studied in Riga, and where he was held by the Soviet powers starting with the Ufa prison and ending with the mental hospital at Burashevo. The journey of Mr Päts, on the globe, ends at Metsakalmistu, in Tallinn.

The school's head teacher Valentina Solovyova started to collect materials on Mr Päts, for the museum, in 2010. She has been helped by Estonians visiting Burashevo. Mr Latt blessed the museum with video material from Estonian Film Archives, on how the Päts burial site was found and of his reburial in Tallinn. Mr Latt also gave the museum his virtual archives on the years 1988–2014 as related to Estonia and Burashevo.

Henn Latt and Valdur Timusk identified the burial site of Konstantin Päts in 1988. «In 1988, at our own initiative and expenses, we went looking for the burial site of Mr Päts. At our request, the Burashevo hospital head Mr Afanasyev called the archives and asked for the file for Mr Päts. To our great surprise, in a short while they called back and said yes the file is there. Then it was clear that Mr Päts was buried in Burashevo,» recalls Mr Latt.

In the summers of 1989 and 1990, an Estonian National Heritage Board expedition was over at Burashevo, the members of which finally succeeded to discover the grave. On June 22<sup>nd</sup> 1990, the remains of Mr Päts were unearthed and it was genetically established that this was the very Konstantin Päts. On October 21<sup>st</sup> 1990, Mr Päts was reburied on Metsakalmistu, Tallinn.

Konstantin Päts, the first President of the Republic of Estonia, was born on February 23<sup>rd</sup> 1874 in Tahkuranna Commune and died on January 18<sup>th</sup> 1956 in Burashevo, Kalinin Oblast (now Tver Oblast).

Mr Päts was arrested by Soviet occupational powers on July 30<sup>th</sup> 1940, barely a week after he was forced to step down. Mr Päts and his family were deported to the Soviet Union where he was held at various custodial institutions in Ufa, Kirov, Vitebsk, Peterhof and Kazan. In the December of 1954, for a brief time Mr Päts was held in Estonia, at Jämejala mental institution. However, due to excessive attention, he was from there transferred to Burashevo. The last year of Mr Päts' life was spent at the psychiatric hospital where he deceased on January 18<sup>th</sup> 1956.

**Andres Einmann**